

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

MICHAEL J. MCCULLOUGH,

Plaintiff,

v.

CAMDEN COUNTY CORRECTIONAL
FACILITY,

Defendant.

HONORABLE JEROME B. SIMANDLE

Civil Action
No. 16-cv-06526 (JBS-AMD)

OPINION

APPEARANCES:

Michael J. McCullough, Plaintiff Pro Se
918 E. Clements Bridge Rd., Apt R1
Runnemede, NJ 08078

SIMANDLE, Chief District Judge:

1. Plaintiff Michael J. McCullough seeks to bring a civil rights complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against the Camden County Correctional Facility ("CCCF"). Complaint, Docket Entry 1.

2. Section 1915(e)(2) requires a court to review complaints prior to service in cases in which a plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*. The Court must sua sponte dismiss any claim that is frivolous, is malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. This action is subject to sua sponte screening for dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) because Plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*.

3. For the reasons set forth below, the Court will dismiss the complaint without prejudice for failure to state a claim. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(b)(ii).

4. To survive sua sponte screening for failure to state a claim, the complaint must allege "sufficient factual matter" to show that the claim is facially plausible. *Fowler v. UPMS Shadyside*, 578 F.3d 203, 210 (3d Cir. 2009) (citation omitted). "A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged." *Fair Wind Sailing, Inc. v. Dempster*, 764 F.3d 303, 308 n.3 (3d Cir. 2014). "[A] pleading that offers 'labels or conclusions' or 'a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.'" *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)).

5. Plaintiff seeks monetary damages from CCCF for allegedly unconstitutional conditions of confinement. As the CCCF is not a "state actor" within the meaning of § 1983, the claims against it must be dismissed with prejudice. See, e.g., *Grabow v. Southern State Corr. Facility*, 726 F. Supp. 537, 538-39 (D.N.J. 1989) (correctional facility is not a "person" under § 1983).

6. Plaintiff may be able to amend the complaint to name state actors who were personally involved in the alleged unconstitutional conditions of confinement, however. To that end, the Court shall grant Plaintiff leave to amend the complaint within 30 days of the date of this order.

7. Plaintiff is advised that the amended complaint must plead sufficient facts to support a reasonable inference that a constitutional violation has occurred in order to survive this Court's review under § 1915. Plaintiff alleges he experienced unconstitutional conditions of confinement during confinements from October 19, 2007 to February 26, 2008, January 10, 2009 to June 8, 2009, August 18, 2010 to November 17, 2010, January 21, 2013 to May 10, 2013, and September 17, 2015 to February 24, 2016. Complaint § III. Plaintiff states: "I slept on floor of facility for more than 50% of my stays. I have back and hip problems now, that I have to attend a physician for. I also retained 7 boils during my stay, when I returned home I still had 2 I had to go to the hospital for." *Id.* Even accepting these statements as true for screening purposes only, there is not enough factual support for the Court to infer a constitutional violation has occurred.

8. The mere fact that an individual is lodged temporarily in a cell with more persons than its intended design does not rise to the level of a constitutional violation. See *Rhodes v.*

Chapman, 452 U.S. 337, 348-50 (1981) (holding double-celling by itself did not violate Eighth Amendment); *Carson v. Mulvihill*, 488 F. App'x 554, 560 (3d Cir. 2012) ("[M]ere double-bunking does not constitute punishment, because there is no 'one man, one cell principle lurking in the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.'" (quoting *Bell v. Wolfish*, 441 U.S. 520, 542 (1979))). More is needed to demonstrate that such crowded conditions, for a pretrial detainee, shocks the conscience and thus violates due process rights. See *Hubbard v. Taylor*, 538 F.3d 229, 233 (3d Cir. 2008) (noting due process analysis requires courts to consider whether the totality of the conditions "cause[s] inmates to endure such genuine privations and hardship over an extended period of time, that the adverse conditions become excessive in relation to the purposes assigned to them."). Some relevant factors are the dates and length of the confinement(s), whether Plaintiff was a pretrial detainee or convicted prisoner, etc.

9. In addition, to the extent that Plaintiff seeks to allege a claim based on a violation of his right to adequate medical care, there are not enough facts to support an inference that Plaintiff's rights were violated in this regard. In his complaint, Plaintiff states: "I advised [corrections officers] I am a diabetic and needed to be on a bunk they told me to 'fight' for a bunk spot." Complaint § III. He further alleges that he

"had problems with [his] sugars being controlled properly by the nurses in the facility." *Id.* § IV. In order to set forth a cognizable claim for a violation of his right to adequate medical care, an inmate must allege: (1) a serious medical need; and (2) behavior on the part of prison officials that constitutes deliberate indifference to that need. *See Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976); *Natale v. Camden Cnty. Corr. Facility*, 318 F.3d 575, 582 (3d Cir. 2003). If he wishes to pursue this claim, Plaintiff should provide additional facts supporting both of the requirements in his amended complaint.

10. As Plaintiff may be able to amend his complaint to address the deficiencies noted by the Court,¹ the Court shall

¹ To the extent the complaint seeks relief for conditions Plaintiff encountered during his confinements from October 19, 2007 to February 26, 2008, January 10, 2009 to June 8, 2009, August 18, 2010 to November 17, 2010, and January 21, 2013 to May 10, 2013, those claims are barred by the statute of limitations. Claims brought under § 1983 are governed by New Jersey's two-year limitations period for personal injury. *See Wilson v. Garcia*, 471 U.S. 261, 276 (1985); *Dique v. N.J. State Police*, 603 F.3d 181, 185 (3d Cir. 2010). "Under federal law, a cause of action accrues when the plaintiff knew or should have known of the injury upon which the action is based." *Montanez v. Sec'y Pa. Dep't of Corr.*, 773 F.3d 472, 480 (3d Cir. 2014). The allegedly unconstitutional conditions of confinement at CCCF would have been immediately apparent to Plaintiff at the time of his detention; therefore, the statute of limitations for some of Plaintiff's claims expired in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2015, respectively. In the event Plaintiff elects to file an amended complaint, he should focus on facts of his September 17, 2015 to February 24, 2016 confinement.

grant Plaintiff leave to amend the complaint within 30 days of the date of this order.

11. Plaintiff should note that when an amended complaint is filed, the original complaint no longer performs any function in the case and cannot be utilized to cure defects in the amended complaint, unless the relevant portion is specifically incorporated in the new complaint. 6 Wright, Miller & Kane, Federal Practice and Procedure 1476 (2d ed. 1990) (footnotes omitted). An amended complaint may adopt some or all of the allegations in the original complaint, but the identification of the particular allegations to be adopted must be clear and explicit. *Id.* To avoid confusion, the safer course is to file an amended complaint that is complete in itself.² *Id.*

12. For the reasons stated above, the complaint is dismissed without prejudice for failure to state a claim. The Court will reopen the matter in the event Plaintiff files an amended complaint within the time allotted by the Court.

13. An appropriate order follows.

January 18, 2017
Date

s/ Jerome B. Simandle
JEROME B. SIMANDLE
Chief U.S. District Judge

² The amended complaint shall be subject to screening prior to service.